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Memorandum

How Long Can North Vietnam Sustain Major Military Operations?

Manpower, Logistic, and Weather Considerations

OSD Review completed

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

HOW LONG CAN NORTH VIETNAM SUSTAIN MAJOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS? Manpower, Logistic, and Weather Considerations

Summary and Conclusions

- 1. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) has the capability to undertake periodic major offensive operations -- with lulls interspersed -- for at least the next six months. In 1968 and early 1969, the last time that Hanoi made an all-out military effort to turn the tide of war in South Vietnam, the NVA and Viet Cong (VC) waged four major campaigns. The first round came in January-February 1968, the second in May-June, and a third, considerably weaker phase of attacks came in August 1968. The fourth round of attacks, in February 1969, was fairly heavy, but came after a longer hiatus. Purely from the standpoint of manpower, equipment, and logistic capabilities, the NVA in 1972 must be credited with the ability to launch major offensive operations on a similar periodic pattern.
- 2. In each of the areas where heavy fighting has occurred since the offensive began, the enemy still has substantial combat units which have not been fully committed to the battle. Nevertheless, the NVA probably cannot sustain each round of truly intense fighting in any area for more than a month or so. Requirements for regrouping, rest, and refitting will vary, depending on the intensity and duration of attacks. The Communists have traditionally been less effective in moving against second round, advanced objectives because their troops are by then in forward, more exposed positions and their supply and maneuver problems become considerably greater. By varying the timing of attacks and lulls in the different regions of South Vietnam, however, Hanoi could create a situation in which heavy action was going on somewhere most of the time over the next six months.

- 3. It is also likely, if the ARVN in general gives a good account of itself and if the NVA suffers heavy casualties, that successive rounds of the fighting in a given area will diminish in intensity. Northern Military Region (MR) 1 may be an exception to this because the NVA has very short supply lines to this region and because good weather there will facilitate enemy personnel and supply movements in coming months. The weather, however, cuts both ways because the good weather will also facilitate South Vietnamese and US air operations.
- 4. In most of the other major battle areas the weather will hinder major military operations to some extent after about mid-May. In no area of the country, however, will the weather pose insuperable obstacles to some form of Communist offensive operations (although the use of some types of armor will obviously be difficult).
- 5. There are at this time no discernible problems of morale in the NVA, or among the civilian population in North Vietnam, of a magnitude which would seriously affect Hanoi's ability to continue the offensive.
- 6. The duration of the present North Vietnamese offensive, at least so far as the next six months are concerned, will be determined primarily by Hanoi's political will rather than by the raw capabilities of the NVA. If Hanoi is determined, despite severe losses, to continue making major attacks in one or another area of South Vietnam during this period, there is little question that it can do so. If, on the other hand, Hanoi should decide at some point that its military offensive was not succeeding, then it might make a political decision to wind it down.
- 7. Hanoi almost certainly will not make such a political decision until it has completed the present rounds of heavy action in northern MR 1, in the area northwest of Saigon, and in the western highlands of MR 2. It is likely that at least another month will pass before North Vietnamese leaders themselves even face up to the question of whether their offensive is or is not succeeding.

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Manpower

- 8. Hanoi has made a very heavy commitment of manpower to the current offensive in South Vietnam, and it has also introduced an unprecedented amount of firepower, which is reflected in sizable deployments to the south of artillery, air defense, and armor units. The possibility exists that North Vietnam could commit an additional division (the 325th) to the battle in MR 1 and could shift units from MR 2 to either MR 1 or MR 3. It is unlikely, however, that the enemy could deploy additional heavy equipment from North Vietnam to the battle zones, except in MR 1, with the advent of the rainy season over most of South Vietnam.
- 9. Data on casualties in the current offensive are very weak and incomplete. Obviously, enemy casualties have been high, but the drain on manpower almost certainly is not as great as during the equivalent time frame in 1968, although in 1968 the VC Local Forces took a heavier proportion of the enemy's casualties. The enemy began his campaign considerably later this year, avoiding heavy early dry season casualties; he provided in advance for some of his losses through heavy infiltration. With the onset of the rainy season (and a reduced vulnerability to Allied air attacks), his casualties probably will decline. Under almost any offensive scenario, the enemy probably will be able to replace his losses via the infiltration pipeline.
- 10. Conscription in North Vietnam over the past year is estimated at about 150,000 men, and there are indications from several good sources that a major callup occurred during December 1971 and January 1972. Assuming a three to four month lag between induction and availability for assignment, these troops could be intended as late dry season replacements for combat losses. Conscription apparently fell off in February and March, but a fair amount of evidence indicates that a new upsurge of inductions is taking place this month. Troops inducted in April could be dispatched as replacements to the war zone by mid-summer if Hanoi intends to maintain the infiltration flow into the wet season. More than half of the estimated 25,000-30,000 men drafted in April 1968 apparently were in the infiltration pipeline by the end of July 1968.⁽¹⁾
- 11. The possibility exists that the enemy may be able to impress more recruits from within South Vietnam if its area of control there expands. We are beginning to receive reports of some enemy successes along these lines. The impact of such impressment, however, would not be very significant militarily for at least several months. As a measure of the differing

^{1.} For a brief discussion of similarities and differences between the 1968 and 1972 offensives, see the Appendix.

situations, in Tet 1968 the VC recruited or forced into service as many as 12,000 men per month. By 1970, enemy recruitment within South Vietnam dropped to no more than 3,000 per month, and it has clearly declined further since then. New voluntary or involuntary recruits would primarily be employed in a support role -- mostly labor and local security tasks -- rather than as an effective fighting force during this campaign.

12. Infiltration from the north to the southern war zones thus far during the 1971/72 dry season has amounted to about $117,000^{(2)}$ men compared with 106,200 during the entire 1970/71 dry season. Dry season infiltration starts during 1970/71 and 1971/72, by destination, are as follows:

	1970/71 (Sep-Jun)	1971/72 (Sep-early Apr)
GVN MRs 1 and 2		
Tri-Thien-Hue MR 5 B-3 Front	6,000 14,200 14,500	13,000 16,000 36,000
GVN MRs 3 and 4 and Cambodia		
COSVN	45,000	38,000
Southern Laos	26,500	14,000
Total	106,200	117,000

- 13. Infiltration starts are now running at a reduced rate but could pick up to keep pace with casualties as the offensive continues. In 1968, nearly as many NVA troops -- more than 66,000 -- arrived in South Vietnam during the third quarter of the year as in each of the first two quarters -- a demonstration of Hanoi's capability to maintain a substantial infiltration flow throughout the wet season if it desires.
- 14. There are a limited number of additional sources of trained manpower which could become available to North Vietnam over the next

2.	This	figure	is	somewhat	lower	than	our	previous	estimates,	
		•						•		

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several months for an absolute maximum commitment to the war in South Vietnam. These include:

- (a) Training units in the north which contain some of Hanoi's best cadre. Some of these could be sent to South Vietnam if the need were great enough, but this would have to override the need for training recruits and inserting them into the infiltration pipeline, which does not seem likely.
- (b) Forces in northern Laos which were expanded by a division during 1971 in preparation for the current campaign. With a reduction in fighting there, the enemy might be able to free one of the two divisions now committed there. There is very recent tenuous evidence that the NVA 312th Division may be preparing to move. If this division were to play any role relative to South Vietnam in the next six months, however, it most likely would be to assume the reserve force duties of the 325th Division, permitting the latter to move south. The 312th itself has seen heavy sustained combat in northern Laos this dry season, and probably needs rest and refitting.
- (c) The recently expanded air defense system is Hanoi's greatest potential source of additional high-quality manpower. However, the current Allied air campaign virtually precludes the possibility of significantly reducing the number of personnel assigned to air defense.

New Weapons

- 15. For the current offensive, Hanoi has committed a new high in firepower to South Vietnam through sizable deployments south of artillery, air defense, and armor units. In tanks alone, the equivalent of four regiments with some 250-350 tanks have been committed so far. This increased firepower has been concentrated so far in three main areas: Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces of MR 1, the B-3 Front of MR 2, and the western part of MR 3.⁽³⁾
- 16. Currently, Hanoi has mobilized within northern MR 1 its heaviest concentration of firepower of the war. The NVA now has within Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces at least five artillery regiments, compared with a previous high of three. In addition, Hanoi has deployed into MR 1

3. There have been	reports suggesting the enemy's intention to use tank
in the border areas of MR 4.	

elements of six and possibly seven antiaircraft artillery regiments, at least one SAM battalion, and two armor regiments with an estimated 150 to 200 tanks. In MR 2, the NVA also has introduced what appears to be the largest concentration of firepower in the B-3 Front area during the war, including two artillery regiments plus elements of at least one antiaircraft regiment and one armor regiment with some 50 to 75 tanks. In MR 3, enemy firepower has been enhanced by the first known use of tanks and field guns against friendly positions concentrated in Binh Long Province. One armor regiment with an estimated 50 to 75 tanks probably has been assigned to western MR 3.

- 17. Not only has Hanoi increased the number of guns, but, equally important, new weapons with greater range and firepower have been introduced into South Vietnam. This includes the first known use within South Vietnam of 130-mm field guns, 160-mm mortars, and wire-guided anti-tank missiles. Captured American-made 175-mm field guns have also been used in Quang Tri. The recent use of wire-guided missiles is the first indication of an anti-tank guided missile in North Vietnam's weapons inventory. Moreover, the 122-mm field gun used previously in MR 1 has made its initial appearance in MR 2 in Kontum Province, and others have been moved toward MR 3.
- 18. Hanoi has also employed new types of armor in South Vietnam, including the first known use by the NVA of the Chinese T-59 and T-63 tanks outside of North Vietnam and the first use of T-54 tanks in South Vietnam. Moreover, tenuous evidence suggests that Hanoi may have used the twin 57-mm track-mounted antiaircraft gun for the first time in South Vietnam at Tan Chanh in Kontum Province.
- 19. Finally, in terms of increased air defense firepower, the NVA is now using for the first time in South Vietnam in addition to the previously observed 12.7, 14.5, 37, and 57-mm antiaircraft guns new 85-mm and 100-mm guns with radar fire control. Elements of at least one SAM battalion also have made an initial appearance in northern MR 1. There are indications that Hanoi may have intended to provide some air support to its ground operations in MR 1, but to date such air support has not materialized in the face of the US air response.
- 20. Losses of armor, artillery, (4) and air defense weapons have already reduced the number of weapons which can be used against the South Vietnamese forces and, as the rainy season sets in, the employment of each

^{4.} These losses in some cases have been partly offset by capture of ARVN equipment.

of these types of weapons will be complicated. To date, NVA tank losses are reported at about 230, some two-thirds of which have occurred in MR 1. Although there is almost certainly some duplication in the figures, it appears that Hanoi has lost the equivalent of about one armor regiment in MR 1 so far in the fighting. Tactical air, ARVN armor, and the improved use by the South Vietnamese Air Force (RVNAF) of the M-72 anti-tank weapon probably can be expected to reduce still further the amount of NVA armor committed against friendly positions in South Vietnam.

- 21. In MRs 1 and 3 the NVA has often not used its tanks effectively in conjunction with infantry. Air defense units in Quang Tri have had some localized problems obtaining sufficient ammunition and food. There has been some reduction in the employment of NVA heavy artillery since the first attacks along the DMZ and the early seige of An Loc. This may be attributed in part to difficulties in the north in moving and zeroing the 130-mm guns and to effective air strikes in both areas.
- 22. We do not have an accurate count of how many tanks, artillery pieces, and other heavy weapons the NVA still has in reserve. It is probable, however, considering the enemy's heavy loss rate to date, that he will not be able to use these weapons to such good advantage in future rounds of his offensive as he was in the first round.

Regional Analysis

23. The forthcoming southwest monsoon season will restrict (but not negate) the enemy's ability to conduct widespread heavy fighting in all areas except in the MR 1 and northern MR 2 lowlands. Although rainy weather also reduces the mobility of Allied forces and the effectiveness of Allied air support, it affects enemy capabilities to a greater degree. The weather presents three primary difficulties to the enemy. First, his combat troops suffer badly from exposure to the elements. Second, resupply activities are impeded. Third, bunkering to offset artillery as well as air bombardment is made much more difficult. Nevertheless, although the general effect of these difficulties is to reduce the tempo of activity on both sides, there are numerous examples in years past of hard fighting during the rainy season.

Military Region 1

24. Since 1968, much of the limited main force warfare which has occurred inside South Vietnam has taken place in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces of northern MR 1. In the years 1969 through 1971, the enemy Order of Battle (OB) in MR 1 fluctuated between an estimated 35,000 and 45,000 men (including the threat area north of the DMZ). The current OB estimate of enemy forces in MR 1 is more than 50,000

men. This reflects the deployment of the 304th, 308th, and 324B NVA divisions to northern MR 1. In addition, major armor and artillery elements have been deployed to support these infantry divisions.

- 25. Table 1 depicts the current VC/NVA main force commitment to the region and provides a rough assessment of combat levels experienced since the beginning of the offensive on 30 March 1972. Currently available information suggests that major elements of the 324B, 304th, and 308th NVA Infantry Divisions have experienced the heaviest combat action over the last three weeks. B-5 Front units have been primarily concerned with logistic activity in northern Quang Tri Province but probably also have sustained casualties from Allied bombing missions.
- 26. With the dry season beginning in MR 1 and the existence of short enemy lines of communication in northern MR 1, the enemy should be capable of sustaining major offensive activity over the next six months, although at great expense because of Allied firepower and with increasingly reduced effectiveness -- resulting from casualties and supply losses -- with each new cycle of intensive fighting. Further enhancing the enemy's capabilities has been the movement of the 325th NVA Division out of the Hanoi area to southern North Vietnam. Furthermore, the forced diversion of ARVN troops and tactical air to Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces has left the lowlands in the southern three provinces of MR 1 and Binh Dinh Province vulnerable to VC operations. Some districts formerly under at least nominal South Vietnamese control now are being penetrated, at least temporarily, by VC main force and local force units supported by hamlet guerrillas. Such gains will probably give the enemy access to sufficient food and labor to enable him to remain in the lowland areas.

Military Region 2

- 27. During the last three years, main force warfare in MR 2 has been concentrated in the highlands of Kontum and Pleiku Provinces. Over the years, pitched battles have been fought each dry season resulting in heavy casualties for both sides with no lasting strategic military gains by either side. During the 1972 dry season, however, the Communists have increased their OB in MR 2 from roughly 21,000 to more than 40,000 men through main force unit deployments and infiltration.
- 28. The 320th NVA Division has been the only division thus far to commit most of its major elements to combat (see Table 2). The 2nd NVA Division was recently committed to the Dak To area, and casualties incurred are unknown. B-3 Front units and the 3rd NVA Division have been concentrating on interdicting primary South Vietnamese lines of communications and in general have not been committed to heavy combat

Table 1

Enemy Units Operating in Military Region 1

Unit	Location	Combat Activity
B-5 Front	Northern Quang Tri Province	
27B Regiment 270 Regiment 246 Regiment Group 31 38th Artillery Regiment 84th Artillery Regiment 204th Artillery		Heavy Light/moderate Light/moderate Heavy Heavy Heavy
Regiment 164th Artillery		Unknown
Regiment		Light
45th Artillery Regiment		Unknown
308th Division	Dong Ha, Quang Tri Province	
36th Regiment 88th Regiment		Heavy Light/moderate (air strikes)
102nd Regiment		Heavy
304th Division	Quang Tri Province	
24B Regiment 66th Regiment 9th Regiment		Heavy Heavy Light
324B Division	Hue, Thua Thien Province	
29th Regiment 803rd Regiment 812th Regiment		Heavy Heavy Unknown
Independent Regi- ments	Hue, Thua Thien Province	
Group 4 Group 5 Group 6		Unknown Light/moderate Heavy
711th Division	Tam Ky, Quang Ngai Province	
38th Regiment 31st Regiment Unidentified Regiment (pos-		Light Heavy
sibly 36th)		Unknown
325th Division	Southern North Vietnam	Strategic re- serve
18th Regiment 95th Regiment 101st Regiment		

Table 2

Enemy Units Operating in Military Region 2

Unit	Location	Combat Activity
320th Division	Western Kontum Province	
48th Regiment 52nd Regiment 64th Regiment		Heavy Heavy Moderate
54th Artillery Regiment		Light
B-3 Front	Central Kontum and Pleiku Provinces	
66th Regiment 28th Regiment 95B Regiment		Moderate Light Light
40th Artillery Regiment		Light
2nd Division	Central Kontum Province	
1st VC Regiment 141st Regiment		Light Light
3rd Division	Binh Dinh Province	
21st Regiment 2nd Regiment 12th Regiment		Light Light Heavy

activity. Losses resulting from Allied air strikes are a significant factor but cannot be quantified for many units. The equivalent of two enemy divisions in MR 2 appear still to be in good fighting shape.

- 29. In the highlands, when the heavy rains begin around mid-May, both Allied and enemy military operations will be curtailed, and the Communists will probably be able to maintain their forward positions through the remainder of the wet season. If the enemy has captured any towns or provincial capitals, however, Allied air operations could make holding them untenable. With a lower level of activity, a portion of enemy main forces in the central highlands (possibly three to five infantry regiments) could be deployed to other military theaters in South Vietnam. This occurred in 1968, when seven main force regiments deployed from MR 2 to MR 3.
- 30. For the remainder of MR 2, the most significant main force threat at the present time is in Binh Dinh Province. The 3rd NVA Division is now targeting northern Binh Dinh Province and could be reinforced with other main force units in the central highlands, increasing the threat to Qui Nhon City on the coast.

Military Region 3

- 31. Units of the enemy's 5th, 7th, and 9th Divisions, which had been operating in Cambodia since early 1970, returned to MR 3 for the current offensive and have been responsible for the great majority of the fighting there (see Table 3). Most regiments of all three of these divisions have been heavily engaged in the battles in Binh Long Province along with the supporting arms of at least one and possibly two regiments of the 69th Artillery Command plus at least two armor battalions. In addition, the 24th Regiment (formerly subordinate to the B-3 Front) and the 271st Independent Regiment have seen some fighting in Tay Ninh and the Parrot's Beak. By bringing in forces previously deployed in Cambodia, the Communists' combat strength in MR 3 has nearly tripled since the end of last year. The enemy OB in MR 3 at the end of 1971 was estimated to be approximately 12,000. Including the units from Cambodia, the Communists have probably committed at least 33,000 men to the current offensive campaign.
- 32. Of the four generally weak enemy main force regiments deployed in MR 3 prior to the current offensive, only the 101st NVA Regiment has engaged ARVN to any significant degree. It is probably included in the force tying down friendly forces attempting to move up Route 13 to An Loc. The 32nd Regiment has moved out of MR 3 and has probably now been committed to northern MR 4. The 33rd and 274th Regiments are thus far not significantly committed.

Table 3

Enemy Units Operating in Military Region 3

Unit	Location	Combat Activity
5th Division	Southern Binh Long and northern Binh Duong Provinces	
E6 Regiment 174th Regiment		Heavy Heavy
7th Division	Central and southern Binh Long Province	
141st Regiment 165th Regiment 209th Regiment		Heavy Heavy Unknown
9th Division	Around An Loc in Binh Long Province	
271st Regiment 272nd Regiment 95C Regiment		Heavy Heavy Heavy
24th Regiment	Parrot's Beak	Moderate
271st Independent Regiment	Parrot's Beak	Moderate
69th Artillery Command	Binh Long Province	
208th Artillery Regiment		Heavy
33rd NVA Regiment	Long Kanh Province	None
101st NVA Regiment	Binh Long and Binh Duong Provinces border area around Route 13	Moderate
274th VC Regiment	Phuoc Tuy Province	Light

33. The overall capability of VC/NVA forces in Cambodia/MR 3 to sustain major combat has already been reduced by the current fighting. Some additional Communist forces could conceivably be committed from Cambodia, but they would not be first line units. Communist main force units already in MR 3, however, may well be able to substantially increase the threat to strategic, populated sectors of the region over the next few months. There is evidence that some of the enemy elements in Binh Long Province are moving down into old Communist base areas closer to Saigon. Along the Saigon River corridors, historically a main avenue of enemy approach to Saigon, Communist units are putting increased pressure on the South Vietnamese apparently with a substantial degree of success. Nevertheless, Communist forces could not sustain an "An Loc" type of combat continuously through the summer.

Military Region 4

- 34. Since late March the enemy's MR 4 capabilities have been substantially augmented. There are currently 11 possibly 12 enemy main force regiments posing a threat to the Delta (see Table 4), some of which are NVA, some VC, and several understrength. There has been some fighting in areas within the region and bordering on it but, so far, the enemy has not committed the great bulk of his main and local forces inside the Delta. As in the past, the onset of the rainy season in the Delta in May will restrict the scale of military activity, but will not negate enemy ability to conduct heavy fighting in localized areas.
- 35. Prior to the opening of the enemy's current offensive, South Vietnam had the equivalent of four divisions in the Delta. Since then, one (the 21st ARVN) has been transferred to MR 3. The enemy moved the 1st NVA Divison (the Phuoc Long Front) to Kampot Province in Cambodia, opposite the extreme northwestern tip of the Delta. The effect of both of these troop deployments has been to eliminate South Vietnam's sizable pre-offensive surplus of troops in the Delta. If the enemy is able to move the 1st NVA Division and one (or possibly two) newly infiltrated independent regiments into the Delta, the South Vietnamese could face a tough fight in MR 4. The damage to pacification and general security in the Delta will probably be extensive in the provinces bordering Cambodia and in the far south. The permanence of the damage will depend largely on the outcome of the main force hostilities. In any case, it is doubtful that the enemy could sustain prolonged combat in areas where the South Vietnamese chose to make a serious defense.

Table 4

Enemy Units Operating in the Delta and Kampot Province, Cambodia

Unit	Location	Combat Activity
1st NVA Division (101D, 52nd, 44th NVA Regi- ments)	Kampot Province, Cambodia	Heavy (at least two regiments)
D2 "VC" Regiment, 11th Division <u>a</u> /	Chuong Thien Province	Light
D1 "VC" Regiment	Chuong Thien Province	Light
95A NVA Sapper Regiment, 11th Division	Lower U Minh Forest	Light
18B NVA Regiment, 11th Division	Lower U Minh Forest	Light
Dong Thap 1 "VC" Regiment	Dinh Tuong Province	Light
Elements, 88th NVA Regiment	Dinh Tuong Province	Light
D3 "VC" Regiment	Vinh Long/Vinh Binh	Light
Elements, 88th NVA Regiment	Kien Tuong/Kien Phong Border	Moderate
32nd NVA Regi- ment <u>b</u> /	Kien Tuong/Kien Phong Border	Unknown

a. The enemy's 11th Division was formed from pre-existing assets in the Delta late last year.

b. Possibly committed to the Delta.

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Logistic Capabilities
The Rear Supply Base
36. Throughout the war, the Communists have constantly worked to expand the logistic system supporting their force fighting in the south. Since the 1968 bombing halt, they have shifted their logistic base southward in North Vietnam by expanding the highway and railroad network, building dispersed storage areas, improving river port facilities, and constructing airfields and an elaborate petroleum pipeline system. This logistic system in North Vietnam has been under air attack for some time, but our data on damage are incomplete.
37. Although we do not know the precise quantity of stocks currently on hand in southern North Vietnam, such stocks are undoubtedly substantial despite drawdowns associated with the present offensive and destruction
from Allied air strikes.
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supplies -- both seaborne and rail -- have continued to move through Vinh. Although recent US air strikes against rail facilities at Vinh and Thanh Hoa temporarily impeded this flow, supplies already stockpiled elsewhere in southern North Vietnam almost certainly are sufficient to prevent the military effort from being affected in a major way. The net effect of the damaged rail facilities at Vinh and Thanh Hoa probably would be to increase seaborne shipments to Vinh or to cause a shift to truck traffic.

- 38. Nor does the damage done to Haiphong by the recent bombing on 16 April entail any significant impediment to the flow of supplies into North Vietnam. Immediately after the bombing, cargo operations came to a complete standstill, but by 19 April operations had resumed and have since continued.
- 39. The principal target of the bombing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area was petroleum storage facilities. Post-bombing levels of petroleum stocks on hand, however -- an estimated 122,000 tons as of 25 April -- are adequate to meet military needs for many months, although more stringent control over civilian uses of petroleum may be required. A substantial amount of petroleum storage is widely dispersed throughout the country, away from the Hanoi-Haiphong area.

40. The Communists' truck inventory is at the highest level ever	noted
The investory man then 20,000 more than	
The inventory – more than 20,000 – represents times the number of trucks required in support of the current off	•

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41. Recent logistics-related construction has complemented the buildup in stocks in southern North Vietnam. Among the most significant recent developments are: two new airfields (one operational), a new north-south road system under construction, extension of the rail system south of Vinh (construction has just begun on a major railroad bridge across the Ca River), and expansion of the pipeline system aimed at connecting Hanoi with the pipeline systems in the North Vietnamese and Laotian Panhandles. Moreover, the pipeline system recently has been extended to the DMZ and is now in operation supporting the current military offensive in MR 1.	
Recent Logistics Developments	
42. Since the start of the current offensive, the Communist logistic commands in the Laotian Panhandle and in northeast Cambodia have been engaged in a major and unabating effort to move large quantities of supplies	25X1
	25X1
43. During the first half of April, the Communists maintained an extensive supply flow on major routes in the Laotian Panhandle emphasizing deliveries toward combat areas. In mid-April the enemy sharply accelerated his logistic drive, and truck traffic surged. Vehicles were noted moving at faster than usual speeds and making longer hauls to reduce cargo handling time. logistic authorities adjacent to northern MR 1 and the central highlands of South Vietnam were shipping supplies both day and night.	25X ² 25X1 25X1
44. In the central Panhandle of Laos, the heaviest traffic has been noted on the routes west of the DMZ and, farther south, on Routes 92 and 922 leading to the A Shau Valley. heavy supply activity also on routes northwest of Tchepone;	25X1 25X1
45. In the southern Panhandle, vehicles continue to move down the new central corridor and on Routes 92/96 to the east. unusually heavy traffic on exit Routes 966 and 110 into the central	25X ⁻

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highlands. Also, similar supply activity on Route 110, both to Cambodia and the B-3 Front.

- 46. The recent sharp reduction in US air sorties over the Laotian Panhandle has unquestionably worked to the enemy's advantage by permitting an increase in daytime movement of supplies. Data from the Department of Defense indicate that during the past three weeks, the United States has been flying an average of less than 50 tactical air strikes and 10 B-52 strikes per day in southern Laos, compared with a daily average of about 260 strikes and 20 B-52 attack sorties before the Communist offensive began. This drop has enabled the Communists to move large quantities of supplies through the system in daylight hours relatively unimpeded. Past performance indicates that even an increase in the level of air strikes would not have prevented the Communists from moving the level of supplies they believed to be necessary to move. (5)
- 47. The North Vietnamese logistic drive of the past few weeks has not gone without trouble, although this has not seriously affected Communist logistic capabilities. Seasonal rains have resulted in muddy roads in some areas which have delayed some convoys and caused some vehicles and tanks to bog down. The Communists also have experienced localized shortages of diesel fuel and lubricants. Reportedly, a large number of tanks the primary consumers of diesel fuel recently ran out of fuel in the A Shau Valley.

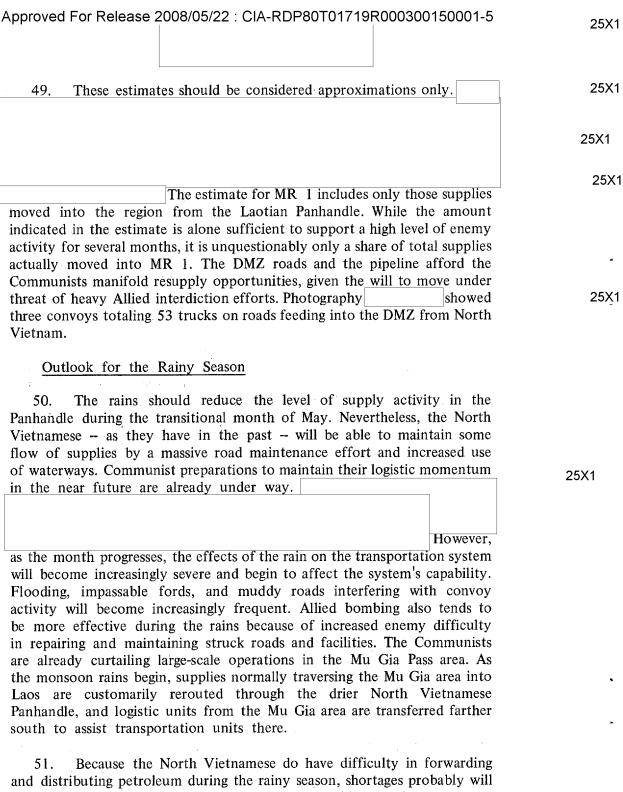
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48. Total projected throughput from Laos during the 1971/72 dry season (October-May) is estimated as follows:

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Region	Tons
MR l	4,050
B-3 Front	7,300 - 9,300
Cambodia	6,100 - 8,000
Total	17,450 - 21,350

^{5.} During the 1968-69 dry season when US aircraft flew an average of over 400 tactical attack sorties and some 30 B-52 strikes a day in southern Laos, the enemy not only was able to maintain his supply network and offset the substantial losses resulting from air strikes but continued to stockpile and ship war materiel into South Vietnam at a rate well in excess of requirements. The many new roads built during the past three years and their augmented air defense system have clearly improved the Communists' capabilities for offsetting aerial attack.



51. Because the North Vietnamese do have difficulty in forwarding and distributing petroleum during the rainy season, shortages probably will begin to occur next month. (In past years, the problem has become severe at times in certain areas.) Although the construction of two petroleum pipelines into Laos has greatly alleviated this situation in the northern and central Panhandle, serious petroleum problems probably will occur in the

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southernmost part of the Panhandle and northern Cambodia -- areas not served directly by the pipelines.

- 52. During June the cumulative effects of the seasonal rains and Allied bombing will reduce sharply the Communists' capability to move supplies by truck through the Laotian Panhandle. Many units will remove vehicles from use until the start of the 1972/73 dry season, and logistic activity will be at a relatively low level.
- 53. However, this does not mean that the Laotian Panhandle system simply shuts down in the wet summer months. Traditionally, local shuttle activity to maintain the forces deployed in the area continues throughout the wet season. This summer the Communists will almost certainly exert considerable effort to keep supplies moving. The Communists could use their new "central corridor" which was built this dry season. It is a heavily canopied route, difficult to interdict, and not highly susceptible to land slides. Supplies coming down the central corridor could be drawn from sizable stockpiles in the northern Panhandle and, possibly, from North Vietnam via the western DMZ roads.

54. The Communists probably also could sustain a substantial supply throughput from the tri-border area during the wet season. This effort pivots on the use of waterways and available stocks

Relatively large quantities of rice (and some petroleum) can move north from Cambodia by boat into southern Laos while arms and ammunition move south to Cambodia. Although no estimate can be made of the amount of supplies which could be moved in this manner this

to move an average of 10 tons daily via waterway into Cambodia.

Regional Analysis

summer, last August,

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Military Region 1

55. The Communists appear logistically capable of supporting major sustained operations in MR 1 throughout the summer. The monsoon rains which affect other areas of South Vietnam beginning in May will not influence Communist operations in MR 1. Because of their proximity to major supply arteries in Laos and the DMZ, Communist forces in northern South Vietnam operate from a close and resilient logistic base. They have received substantially greater supply flows this year and, with increased local procurement of supplies, are in a stronger supply position than they were a year ago.

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the Communists were able

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56. Recent evidence suggests that the Communists have the capability to maintain a steady, persistent threat in this military region. According to photography, another new road — the fifth — has been built through the DMZ. The photography showed that Routes 1000/1009 had been extended through the DMZ and into South Vietnam to the general area of Routes 561 and 9 and had already reflected evidence of heavy tracked-vehicle activity. Routes 102 and 1006, begun earlier this dry season, have also been completed and are now motorable. These roads, unlike those in the Laotian Panhandle, will not be subject to major rain damage during the summer months. Photography revealed a new petroleum pipeline entering the northern half of the DMZ from North Vietnam. Beginning at a petroleum storage area along Route 101 south of Dong Hoi, the pipeline extends to a point just porth of the Pan Hei Piper in the	25X1
the pipeline extends to a point just north of the Ben Hai River in the DMZ.	^{25X1} 25X
57. Because of these and other logistic developments, the North Vietnamese should experience few logistic constraints in MR 1 over the next several months. As the heavy monsoon rains envelop greater portions of southern South Vietnam, however, an increasing number of Allied air sorties could be diverted to the northern areas, further impeding supply operations there. The consequences of such air action would be most likely felt in the forward areas of fighting where shortages of certain types of ordnance might temporarily impede the enemy's battle actions. It seems highly unlikely, judging from historical experience, that bombing alone could prevent the enemy from carrying out his general logistic plans in MR 1.	
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58. Substantial supply deliveries have accompanied the heavy buildup of enemy troops in the B-3 Front area of MR 2.	25X1
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Concurrently, the enemy has been transporting large volumes	25X1
of foodstuffs from Cambodia (along with possibly substantial amounts from the coastal lowlands of MR 2) to forces deployed in the B-3 Front. A VC cadre captured in Kontum Province stated that since early February, the North Vietnamese had been transporting food from B-3 Front	
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"rear areas" to supply bases near Kontum City and that some 1,500 tons of rice had been distributed to battlefield units.

- Between October 1971 and the end of May 1972, an estimated 59. 7,300-9,300 tons of supplies probably will have been delivered from southern Laos to the B-3 Front. Weapons, ammunition, and equipment will constitute a little over half of this total (4,200-5,400 tons). The current estimate of the weapons, ammunition, and equipment required to sustain offensive operations in this area is about 200-300 tons per month -considerably higher than the estimated 1968 average. Detected (and projected) shipments of ordnance to the B-3 Front are adequate both for sustained military operations for several months and for providing reserves for stockpiling. The amount of stocks already available in rear supply bases and the ability of the Communists to deliver additional supplies into the area during the wet season assure the Communists of an adequate supply base from which to operate. The main problem will be one of moving the supplies to forward positions; such activities will be complicated by the weather and air strikes.
- 60. Elsewhere in MR 2, the Communists should begin to experience greater resupply problems as the monsoon season approaches. Even if the enemy is able to improve his position in some areas as he is currently doing in northern Binh Dinh Province the extended supply lines to the west, combined with more limited mobility during the wet season, would seriously impede continued logistic support into coastal regions.

Military Regions 3 and 4

- 61. Currently, the Communists probably have sufficient stocks in place to provide for fairly heavy sustained action in the provinces contiguous to the Cambodia border. The approaching wet season will slow but not stop the enemy's resupply efforts. Supplies in place and in adjacent Cambodian caches should facilitate resupply operations this summer, enabling the enemy to threaten Allied positions and installations strung out along the border.
- 62. The enemy, however, traditionally has had greater difficulty distributing and prepositioning stocks deep within MRs 3 and 4. Although the available evidence suggests that the enemy may not be able to sustain logistically a prolonged major offensive within the interiors of both MRs 3 and 4, it is not possible to be categorical. The wet season will further inhibit overland supply movements within the country, but waterborne deliveries should continue unimpeded. Since mid to late 1971, reporting has identified supplies moving from Cambodia border bases to points deep within both MRs 3 and 4.

- 63. With the large enemy combat force now positioned along the border, the Communist logistic system in eastern Cambodia appears relatively safe from ARVN and/or FANK intrusions. In support of offensive operations in MR 3, the enemy can maintain supply deliveries from rear depots in Kratie, Chup, and Dambe, via Route 7 and 13 (both all-weather roads), to bases and staging areas along the Cambodia/South Vietnam border. Further south the enemy's **de facto** sanctuaries opposite MR 4 are more remotely situated from the key logistic centers in Kratie and Kompong Cham Provinces and thus are more difficult to resupply than those serving MR 3. Nevertheless, small-scale shipments of weapons and ammunition can move by sampan south along tributaries of the Mekong River into MR 4. A truck/sampan route leading from Chup into northern MR 4 has also been detected operating on a regular basis.
- Detected shipments within South Vietnam have individually been 64. small - usually less than 10 tons -- but they do reflect regular use of supply corridors by the enemy. In MR 3, three separate logistic corridors have been identified, each closely paralleling a major South Vietnam waterway and leading into one of the Communist military subregions around Saigon. Within MR 4, reports of supply flows have been largely (but not exclusively) focused on the northeastern part of the region. However, Communist forces in MR 4 may also be satisfying part of their resupply requirements from seaborne deliveries. Although none of the dry season's 18 detected attempts at supply infiltration by oceangoing trawlers this dry season were successful, some supplies apparently are being moved from Cambodia into Kien Giang Province on the west coast of South Vietnam. Several reports have been received this year indicating coastal infiltration by the enemy to the U Minh Forest area in southern Kien Giang. The reports indicate that 5-ton to 15-ton fishing vessels offload supplies on motorized sampans which carry the goods to coastal waterways. The successful delivery of these supplies should appreciably reduce the enemy's burden on the overland resupply network and partly satisfy the enemy's low external resupply requirements in MR 4.
- 65. By the end of this dry season, the enemy could have delivered an estimated 6,100-8,000 tons of weapons, ammunition, and equipment into Cambodia out of southern Laos. As much as 2,900 tons may have been required to meet requirements in Cambodia, the residual (3,200-5,100 tons) being available for satisfying requirements in MRs 3 and 4. Resupply requirements for these regions during the current dry season will have amounted to as much as 1,500 tons. If the enemy were operating from the high end of the remaining tonnage and were able to successfully preposition these supplies, he would technically be in a position to sustain fairly large-scale operations in both MRs 3 and 4 throughout the summer; if at the low end of the range, he probably could meet MR 3 requirements for sustained offensive action but probably would be unable to support

fighting in MR 4 much above the present level of activity there. In either case, the weakness of the enemy's infrastructure within MRs 3 and 4 will continue to be an impediment to the enemy, as will ARVN countermeasures, Allied air strikes, and the wet season itself.

Weather as a Factor in the Enemy Offensive

- 66. Historically, the alternating periods of dry and wet, cloudy weather in Vietnam have played an important role in the timing and duration of Communist offensive operations. There is every indication that the weather has had and will continue to have an important bearing on enemy plans in the current offensive. Because each alternating period of monsoon weather affects the several parts of South Vietnam and nearby areas in different ways, there is really no such thing as a perfect time climatically for a countrywide offensive. While not perfect, the present time of transition from one period to the other offers the enemy reasonably good conditions for tactical operations in all areas of the country.
- 67. The Communists launched their current offensive at the end of March, during the beginning of the transition from the Northeast to the Southwest Monsoon. In northern South Vietnam, where the enemy offensive first broke, the weather during March had been characterized by increasing cloudiness and some heavy rain to the west of the Annam Mountain range. To the east of the range, cloudiness and wetness was gradually decreasing, although low clouds, drizzle, and fog tend to persist for some weeks along the northeastern coast.
- 68. For Communist operations in MR 1 this period from mid-March through most of April is about as good as they can expect. The heavy rains have ended, and the ground is not wet enough to seriously hamper movement, but the cloud cover still inhibits Allied air operations, including reconnaissance.
- 69. By late April and early May, the weather to the east of the mountains in MR 1 tends to become increasingly clear and dry. When the Southwest Monsoon is fully in effect usually by June in this area MR 1 east of the mountains, as well as the coastal portions of MR 2, can expect about 15-20 days of good visibility and relatively dry weather each month through September. The effectiveness of Allied air operations should improve during this period. At the same time, however, no ground restraints resulting from wetness are imposed on enemy forces operating in the area. Nonetheless, the Communists may well hope to make most of their military gains in MR 1 and eastern MR 2 before the full advent of the Southwest Monsoon.

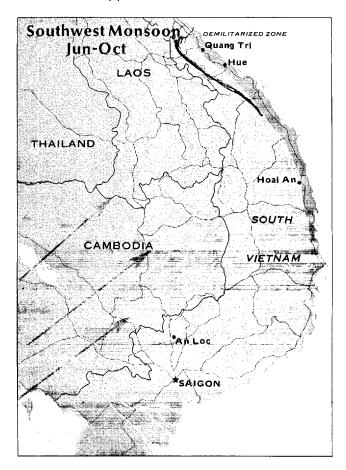
The Highlands

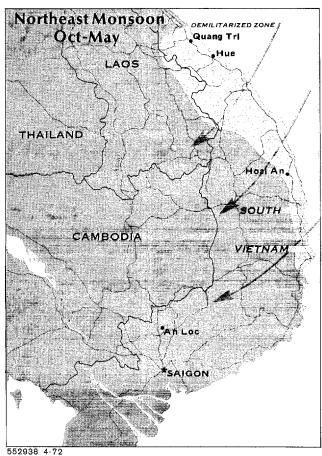
- 70. The impending shift from the Northeast to Southwest Monsoon probably will affect the enemy offensive in the highlands which has started in earnest in recent days. Throughout most of March and much of April the dry, clear weather which had prevailed in the highlands during the winter months began gradually to deteriorate. Allied air operations, however, were not greatly hampered. As the shift in monsoons approaches, flying weather deteriorates, while the ground for several weeks in late April and early May remains relatively dry, thus facilitating enemy ground movements, but hampering Allied air operations. By mid to late May, the rains from the Southwest Monsoon in the Highlands should be heavy enough to begin to impede Communist ground and resupply movements substantially.
- 71. The actual date of the beginning of the sustained Southwest Monsoon varies considerable from year to year, making an exact prediction of its effects difficult. Mid-May is usually accepted as the time for the full transition, but it has occurred occasionally as late as 1 June. This year, the weather change appears to be lagging and is not expected to be completed until late May.

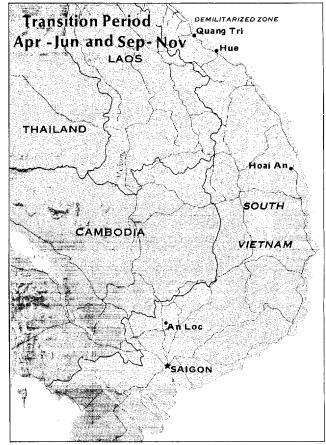
Military Region 3 and 4

- 72. As in the highlands, the MR 3 and Delta areas are now about to begin their rainy seasons. With the shift in the monsoon in mid to late May, rain and overcast conditions will become much more frequent in these areas. When the shift is fully in effect, the average monthly rainfall throughout the Delta will be from six to ten inches. North of Saigon, rainfall also gradually increases. By late June, the rainfall will be heavy enough to impede vehicular movements along the road networks in most of the Delta south of Saigon, particularly in the Plain of Reeds and south of the Saigon River. Historically, however, Communist guerrilla-type forces have operated fairly effectively through August in these wet areas. Enemy armored and wheeled forces would doubtless be seriously hampered in operations after late May. While Allied air operations become more difficult, the cloudiness is intermittent enough so that a substantial rate of operations can usually be conducted.
- 73. In sum, the enemy faces increasing difficulty throughout South Vietnam if he continues major offensive operations beyond the end of May. In the north, he will be increasingly vulnerable to air interdiction under increasingly clear skies. From the highlands south, increased wetness will gradually undercut operations by enemy armored and wheeled units. In no area of the country, however, will the weather pose insuperable obstacles

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Prevailing winds
Rainy area
Dry area
Area of increasing cloud cover

to the continuation of Communist offensive operations in some form over the next 4 to 6 months, if the Communists are willing to pay the price.

Communist Morale As a Sustaining Factor in the Offensive

- 74. Hanoi almost certainly anticipated that its present military campaign might be a long and difficult one, and to the best of its ability it prepared accordingly. Although Allied counteractions may have caused more damage than the Communists expected, present evidence gives no solid reason to believe that any part of the Communist structure has been so shaken as to call into question Hanoi's will or ability to continue the offensive.
- 75. There is a fairly convincing body of evidence that Hanoi's leaders had to overcome some serious differences before they agreed to unite behind the current war strategy. The article earlier this year in which the chief of the North Vietnamese secret police called for stringent measures against the faint of heart suggests that some dissension persists. Heavy setbacks on the battlefield would doubtless feed this dissension, and even a failure to make demonstrable progress might resurface the qualms of some members of the politburo. At the present stage of the offensive, however, it is hard to believe that the top leaders in Hanoi are as yet deeply discouraged. They almost certainly had anticipated heavy Communist troop losses in South Vietnam and had programmed their manpower deployments accordingly. While they have not yet been able to secure some of their apparent initial objectives, such as the capture of a provincial capital, the Communists almost certainly do not believe that the course of the battle yet provides any grounds for changing the current strategy.
- 76. Although the North Vietnamese appear worried that some sort of constraint may be placed on their military activity through the interactions of the big powers, they appear to be betting that such constraints are not likely to have a dampening effect on their current efforts. If anything, concern over future big-power pressures may make them even more eager to press the present offensive home.
- 77. As for the North Vietnamese populace, there is no reason to believe its morale has deteriorated at the present point in the fighting. Although the people are doubtless aware that an offensive such as this is going to be costly, they do not yet have any definite news of losses at the front. In the meantime, North Vietnamese media are saturating them with a euphoric line on the offensive a line they probably do not credit completely but one that certainly conditions their reading of the current situation. Some North Vietnamese doubtless have been shaken by the bombing, but most have probably been receptive to the regime's

exhortations to greater unity and dedication in the face of the raids. On the whole, therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the civilian populace in the north will, as ever, follow the regime.

- 78. The mood of Communist troops in South Vietnam is more of a question mark. Even before the offensive began, North Vietnamese infantry units almost certainly were less effective and less well motivated than they were in earlier years, although this deterioration has been partly offset in some cases by the armor and artillery that Hanoi has brought to bear for the first time. Morale has probably declined further under the pounding Hanoi's forces have taken since the offensive began. Nevertheless, the overall impression is that discipline has been maintained. There are only scattered indications that desertion is a problem, and Communist troops have not been breaking and running under Allied air pressure. Success breeds success when it comes to morale, of course, and Communist efforts to keep their troops up to snuff will require periodic "victories" to which they can point in morale-building sessions.

APPENDIX

Tet 1968 and the Current Offensive

The 1972 Offensive has evoked comparisons with the 1968 Tet Offensive. There are both contrasts and similarities between the two offensives, but in terms of providing clues to the enemy's intentions and capabilities during the next six months the former probably outweigh the latter. The contrasts lie in the fundamental differences in the mix of strength and weakness that influenced the capabilities on both sides. Two groups — the Viet Cong local forces and US ground forces — played critical roles in 1968 but are largely absent in 1972.

The similarities between these two campaigns are rooted to a large extent in the trends preceding the offensives. The decisions adopted in mid-1967 and mid-1971 to change strategy in favor of heavy military attacks reflected unfavorable military and political trends evident well ahead of each offensive. By the spring and summer of 1967, the Allies were maintaining constant pressure on the enemy in South Vietnam; in 1970 and 1971 that pressure – now increasingly South Vietnamese – extended into Cambodia and southern Laos. The trends were similarly discouraging to the enemy in regard to rural population control, the political struggle, and the diplomatic front.

The Tet Offensive launched virtually simultaneous attacks against nearly every South Vietnamese population center. Thirty-six of South Vietnam's 44 provincial capitals, five of the six autonomous cities, and dozens of district towns were attacked. As the enemy's three-phase offensive of 1968 finally evolved,* the cannon-fodder turned out to be principally Viet Cong forces. Widespread upgrading of guerrillas strengthened the VC forces, and there were initially few NVA soldiers in MR 3 and none in MR 4. Only in MR 1 and some extent in the MR 2 highlands did the fighting take the conventional main force character of the present offensive. In the initial two weeks of the offensive, more than 30,000 enemy were killed; first quarter losses that year reached more than 100,000.

Despite the scope of the Tet Offensive, it is estimated that less than half of the enemy's main force units outside of the DMZ area participated in the attacks. Moreover, the NVA units which were to be committed in

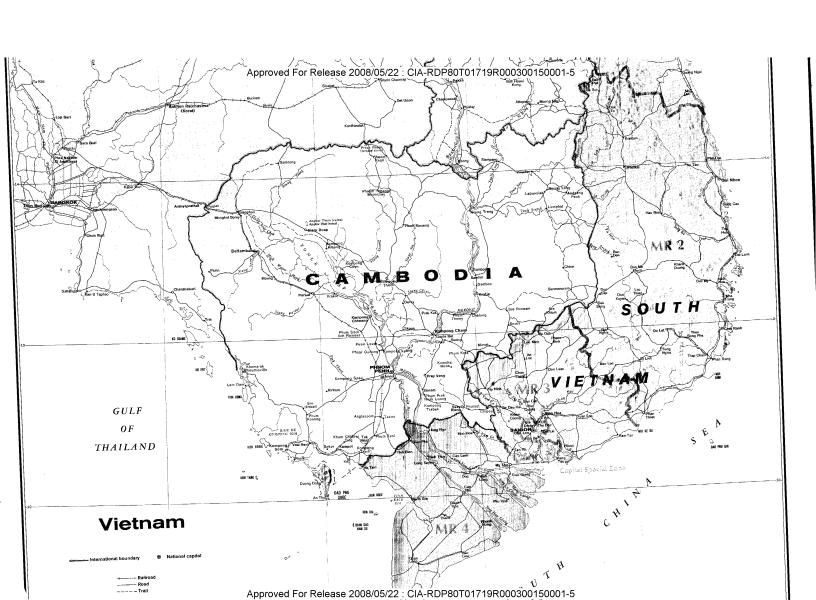
^{*} The third offensive period was planned for August, but attacks were few and weak, and enemy forces retired to base areas.

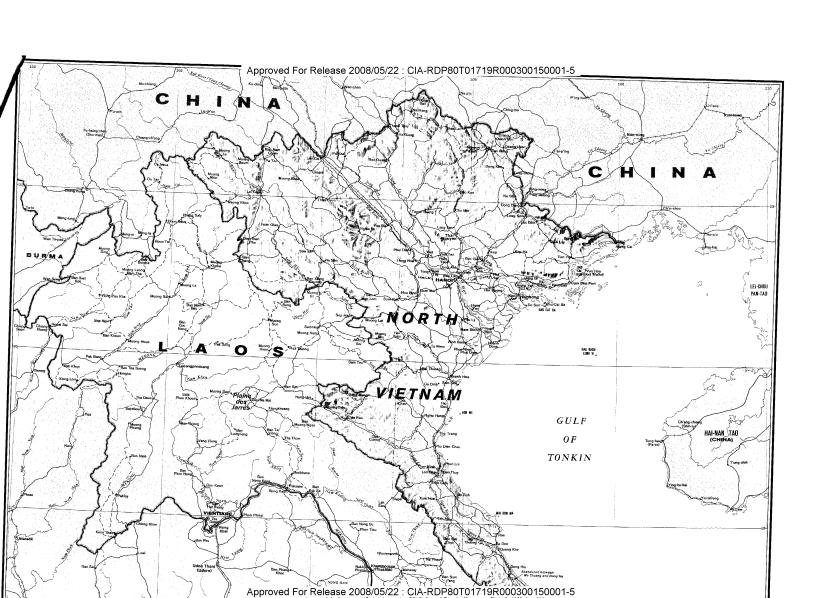
the second phase (the May-June offensive) were generally held in reserve.* Thus, despite the enormous casualties of the Tet phase, the enemy was able to preserve much of his main force power. By the end of the first quarter of 1968, the number of enemy maneuver battalions had increased by 60 as a result of NVA redeployments, and high infiltration arrivals through the second and third quarters of 1968 enabled the enemy to maintain strength levels comparable to the pre-Tet period.

In marked contrast, this year nearly the entire burden of the first month's fighting has fallen to the NVA main forces, whose task in the first phase is to prepare the way for increasing control in populated areas by weakening RVNAF and developing in-country forward bases that have been largely eroded by Allied forces since 1968. The offensive that has thus far unfolded contrasts in other aspects. A greater reliance on heavy weaponry has been matched by a greater caution in committing infantry to battle. Enemy casualties reported for the first two weeks of April 1972 were about one-third as high as reported for the first two weeks of Tet 1968; however, casualties among the NVA main forces may be nearly as high. No province capitals have yet been overrun, and relatively few are currently threatened. The three active battle zones are all in relatively unpopulated border areas.

The obvious deferment of political activities on the enemy's part is in pointed contrast to the earlier offensive. During Tet, the enemy carried the political blueprints with them into battle, the targets were essentially civilian, and the attackers were predominantly Viet Cong units; the current offensive emphasizes the military requirement to set the stage for subsequent political activities. Only in recent days — in areas where the Viet Cong have traditional residual strength and some friendly main forces have been removed — has the populace become the target of this offensive and subject to attacks by Local Forces. Just one Liberation Committee (in Quang Tri) has been reported thus far. In fact, COSVN Directive 43 gives the VC Infrastructure and VC Local Forces until 30 May to prepare for the "spontaneous uprising."

^{*} Just prior to the May-June offensive, seven NVA main force regiments were moved from MR 2 to northwestern MR 3. This was designed to reinforce the weakened MR 3 units and to concentrate the offensive against Saigon (which was penetrated in May 1968) and protect the sanctuaries and supply bases from Cambodia.





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